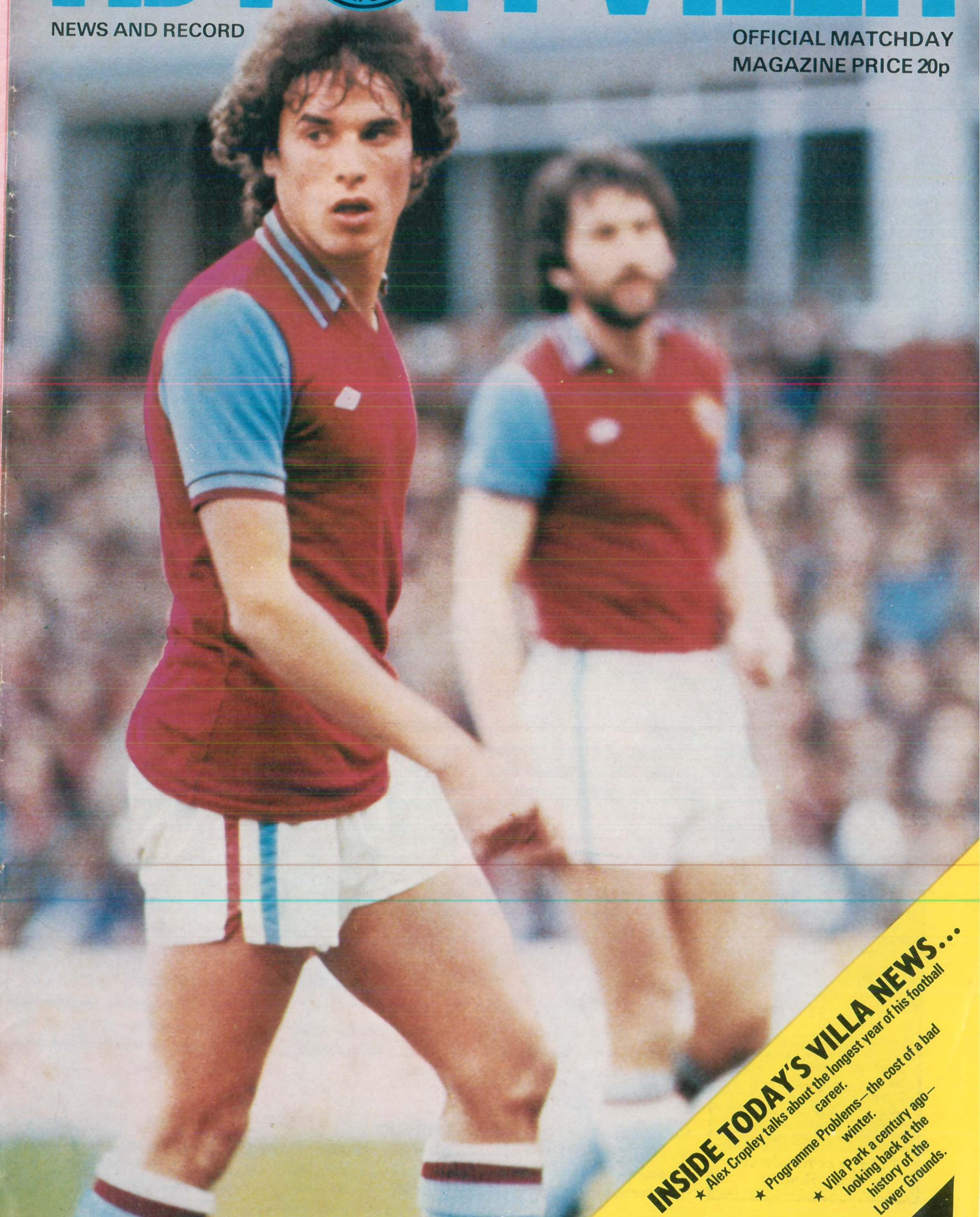


ASTON VILLA



NEWS AND RECORD

OFFICIAL MATCHDAY
MAGAZINE PRICE 20p



INSIDE TODAY'S VILLA NEWS...

- ★ Alex Cropley talks about the longest year of his football career.
- ★ Programme Problems—the cost of a bad winter.
- ★ Villa Park a century ago—looking back at the history of the Lower Grounds.

20 QUESTIONS

Test your knowledge of events in soccer during 1978.
Answers to the questions can be found on Club Scene page.



ASTON VILLA FOOTBALL CLUB LIMITED

VILLA PARK, BIRMINGHAM B6 6HE

TELEPHONE
CLUB—021-327 6604
INFORMATION—021-328 1722

PRESIDENT: MR A. TREVOR GILL

CHAIRMAN: MR HARRY KARTZ

VICE-CHAIRMAN: MR RON BENDALL

DIRECTORS:
MR DOUGLAS ELLIS MR ERIC HOUGHTON
MR DONALD BENDALL

MANAGER: RON SAUNDERS



TREVOR
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RON
SAUNDERS



ALAN
BENNETT

ERIC
WOODWARD

DAVID
TARGETT

SECRETARY: ALAN BENNETT

COMMERCIAL MANAGER: ERIC WOODWARD

MEDICAL OFFICER: DR DAVID TARGETT

ASTON VILLA NEWS AND RECORD
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
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Today's cover picture:
Gary Shelton

ONE

(see picture below)

Give venue, teams and result
of this match.



TWO

Who scored Villa's final goal
in the 1977-78 UEFA Cup
competition?

THREE

Of the current First Division
players, who has scored most
League goals in his career?

FOUR

Who scored most League
goals in the four divisions last
season? Clue: He used to
play for Birmingham City.

FIVE

Name the three clubs which
applied successfully for re-
election to the Fourth Div-
ision last season.

SIX

(see picture next column)
Where was this match played
this season?



SEVEN

What was the result of last
season's FA Youth Cup Final?

EIGHT

Which club scored most
League goals last season—
Liverpool, Spurs, Watford or
Swansea?

NINE

Who was the leading goal-
scorer in the 1978 World Cup
Finals?

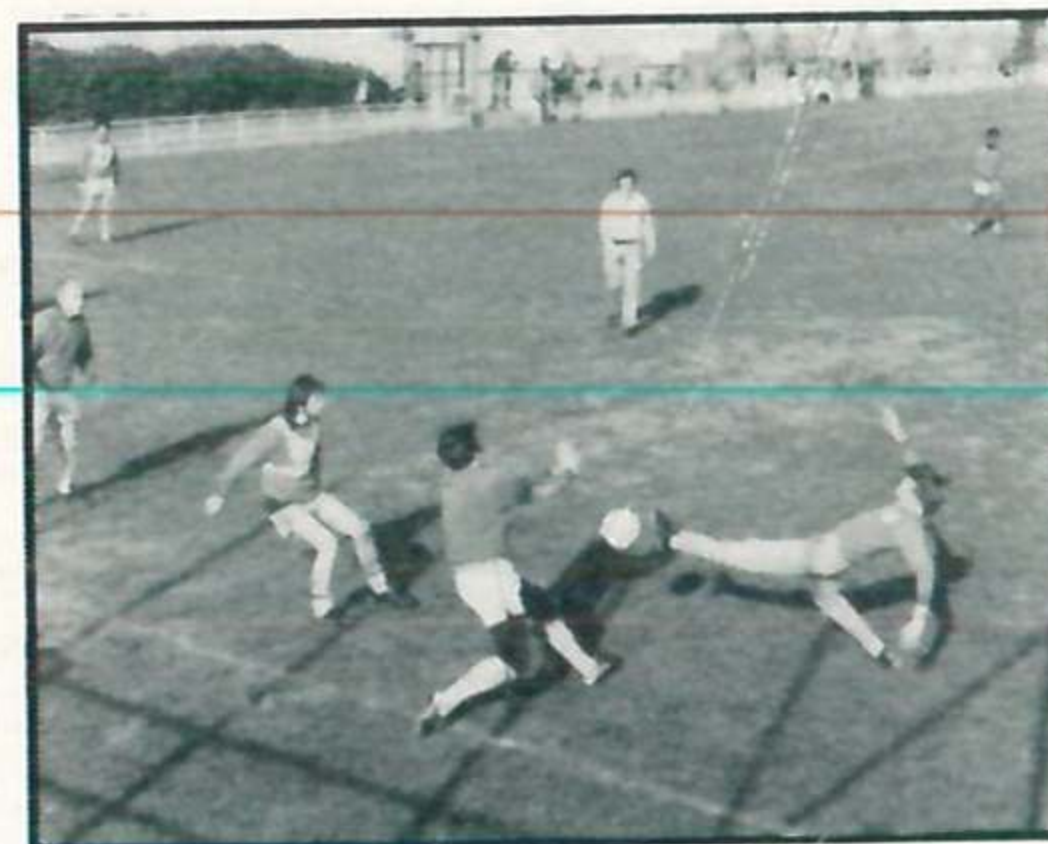
TEN

Who scored the 1,000th goal
in World Cup Finals?

ELEVEN

(see picture below)

Where was this picture
taken? Clue: It was warm and
sunny!



TWELVE

For which League club is Bob
Wilson registered this
season?

THIRTEEN

Who was Second Division
"Manager of the Year" for
1977-78?

FOURTEEN

Alan Simonsen was European
"Footballer of the Year" be-
fore Kevin Keegan's nomi-
nation. For which club does
Simonsen play?

FIFTEEN

Which non-League club
made most progress in last
season's FA Cup?

SIXTEEN

(see picture below)

What was the significance of
this picture?



SEVENTEEN

Which club won the Welsh
Cup in 1977-78?

EIGHTEEN

Who scored England's goal
against Scotland at Hampden
Park last season?

NINETEEN

Against which country did
Andy Gray score on his
return to the Scotland team
this season?

TWENTY

Who was top goal-scorer for
Villa's Central League side
last season?



BEATING



THE FREEZE!

We have always prided ourselves in the fact that the *Aston Villa News and Record* is a pacesetter for new standards and ideas in the field of programme production.

Our publication has won general acclaim as the best in the country for almost a decade and, today, the magazine chalks up another 'first'—although the latest innovation comes with rather more reluctance than usual.

Because of heavy financial losses during the bad spell of weather, bringing numerous postponements and the scrapping of a number of programmes, we are producing a special emergency issue.

The normal full-colour magazine has been specially designed so that the material is up to the quality expected by Villa supporters—but will not go out of date in the event of another postponement. All the information relating to the actual match—Ron Saunderson's comments, team line-ups and outline on the opposition—is contained on a separate sheet inserted into the magazine.

The advantage is considerable. Instead of losing thousands of pounds because of a postponement, the new formula reduces the loss to under £300 and without affecting the normal standard of our publication. Should the game be called off, the insert would be thrown away and a new sheet would be prepared to go into the same magazine for the next match at Villa Park.

Commercial Manager, Eric Woodward, explains the background to a scheme which we feel will become a format for other clubs to follow. He says: "When this season's losses passed the £6,000 mark, it was abundantly clear that there was no way we could continue to scrap programmes with such an obviously bad winter on us.

"In ten years, we have not published an out-of-date programme. This policy has been a fundamental part of our strategy and has some bearing on the remarkable reputation our programme has developed. But, of course, there is an expensive price to pay for re-printing and being up-to-the-minute.

"Three issues last year were wasted because of postponements. But with each year the cost of production goes up by at least 10% and we are now in a situation, despite a 20p cover price, where we have to absorb the increased costs without compensation to ourselves.

"Frankly, we can't maintain our standards without looking closely at the finances involved, and it became evident that we had to find an alternative to scrapping programmes. We would not consider selling an old programme, with dated material, such as players looking at Christmas trees in March. And we weren't very enthusiastic about following the example of others in putting a new wrap-around cover on an old programme.

"In consequence, after a lot of time and talk involving a number of people, we have found a system which seems acceptable to everyone. Each person is now satisfied that his particular job can be carried out—with a considerable saving to the Club.

"Our Programme Writer, Mike Beddow, devised the formula and the rest fell into place following negotiations and discussions all round. We hope this provides the solution we need during a period in which there is likelihood of bad weather.

"We also hope that the first of these emergency issues proves the point to the satisfaction of our supporters—and still gives you the best value for money in the business."

Supporters might care for an explanation of why programmes have to be printed in advance of the match-day. After the setting-up process, which is well under way early in the week, the magazine is printed four pages at a time and when the last section is completed, it takes much of Friday for the sheets to be collated, folded and stitched. So there is no way that we can stop the run and save the money before a referee inspects the pitch on a Saturday morning.

Jack Boffy, of *Peerless Press*, and his workers are as disappointed as anyone when their efforts are wasted. They have given us tremendous co-operation during this difficult period—but until the advent of today's new formula, they were committed by a tight deadline.

The delivery of the programme has to be made to specific times because with so many selling points around the ground, Gerald Harris and his sellers don't just turn up half-an-hour before the kick-off. A lot of preparation goes into spreading the parcels in the appropriate quantities for each selling point.

In recent weeks, we have all been very miserable when hearing the 'Match Off' decision. We can assure you that the frustration of the fans in no way equals the frustration and irritation of the staff at Villa Park, who build up to 'match condition' almost on a parallel with the players.

The anti-climax is considerable and it's no consolation that you have the rest of the day off. We know we have to do it all over again—just like the players. But at least the new programme formula means that one job is not wasted in the future.

Finally, we would like to draw our supporter's attention to the Club's Information Number 021-328 1722. Any news of postponements or match prospects is on the tape and this is the number you should dial. Please do not ring the switchboard. It saves time and temper to go through the Information Number—particularly for supporters living some distance away.

The media gives us every possible help in announcing postponements as quickly as possible and we do try to get a decision at the earliest time. But at the end of the day, if the referee wants to make up his mind later, there is nothing the Club can do.

Pictured top right: A sad moment for all concerned with the production of the *Villa News & Record*. Trevor Thorne and Jack Boffy, of *Peerless Press*, survey thousands of wasted sheets waiting to be destroyed on the guillotine (below).

And we also display at the top of the page the programmes which you didn't see.





ALFA ROMEO

Alex Cropley talked to me on the day after the Club's Annual Party. He didn't miss the significance of the timing. "I was thinking last night," he said. "Twelve months ago I was at the same party on crutches."

Then he allowed his memory to dwell on the longest year of his football career. He recalled times of near-despair when a broken left leg was slow to heal . . . the magical day when an operation was cancelled because the surgeon discovered the bones were knitting by nature . . . and the hard slog which led him to a re-appearance in the first team, exactly 12 months to the day of his injury.

His substitute outing against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge lasted for only eight minutes, but it spelled out the message that Alex Cropley was back in business—and becoming impatient. "It was great to be back at Chelsea," he said. "But it wasn't long enough to prove anything. I was confident about my general fitness, although I accepted that I would have to bide my time before getting a full game."

Alex could be excused if he felt bitter about his misfortune in collecting a fracture at each end of his three professional clubs. Yet he remains objective of his assessment of the injuries. "I suppose I have been a bit unlucky to have had three breaks," he says. "But it happened. It was bad luck. And that's it. Perhaps there were one or two days when I thought I didn't deserve to be laid up again, especially when it seemed as if I would be having an operation."

"But at least I've been lucky in suffering no reaction when starting to play again. When I broke my right ankle with Hibernian, I had an operation to insert a screw. This is still in the ankle, but I've had no bother from it. I was out from February to the next season and everything was OK after a good rest."

"With Arsenal, the fracture was in the fibula of my left leg—a very similar injury, I believe, to the one that Birmingham City's Keith Bertschin has had this season. He's probably had one or two additional problems, but this is a non-weight-bearing bone

and it took me barely two months to get back. I've had no bother since."

"The last injury was in the same leg, but higher up and this time I broke the tibia and fibula. If you had to choose between one or the other, you'd always prefer it to be the fibula. The weight is carried by the tibia and it takes much longer to recover from this fracture."

Alex was prepared for a long lay-off as he rested during Christmas 1977, but he didn't expect to be in plaster for six months. "By then," he says, "everybody was wondering why it was taking so long—the manager especially. I saw the surgeon regularly and eventually he decided to have me in hospital—at the same as Tommy Craig went in for his knee operation."

At that stage, Alex was expecting to have an operation—and a painful one, involving a plate and a graft from the hip bone. It was something he accepted because if the leg wouldn't heal on its own, he was prepared to try anything that would help him back into an Aston Villa shirt.

So you can imagine his delight when the surgeon removed the plaster and found that the leg had improved dramatically since the previous examination. "He tried to move the bones—and couldn't," says Alex. "He took an X-ray and kept me in overnight. The next morning he tried the bones again and the news was still good. The leg had healed by nature—and just in time."

Instead of a visit to the operating theatre, he was sent home with just a small plaster covering the area of the break.

Alex started his fitness build-up almost immediately. "The first problem was trying to bend my left knee which was locked solid," he says. "The ankle was exactly the same. I reckon they needed lubricating with a spot of oil! The thigh muscle also took time to develop, then it was progress from walking to running."

"There was no time for holidays, just a couple of days back in Scotland. After all, football is my job and I knew I had to work hard through the summer."

"Luckily, I had no real pain, even when I started running again. Yet I was talking to Keith Leonard, who broke the same bone, and he said he had so much pain that he was almost in tears as he ran around Bodymoor Heath."

Just the simple involvement with light training was a relief after the dreary winter months. "The boredom was the worst thing," explains Alex. "I would sit on the settee feeling miserable every day. Then I'd go up to the training ground and feel even more miserable, watching the lads running around and enjoying themselves."

"I read a few books and watched just about everything on television. I certainly didn't need the *TV Times* to tell me what would be on! Fortunately, I was able to watch most of the home matches from a box in the North Stand. When I was on Crutches, this was the only place I could be comfortable—there was no way I could have sat in an ordinary seat in the stand."

In Alex's recollections of that period, the attitude of the Villa supporters has a special place in his affections. That was why he rang into Tony Butler's phone-in on *BRMB* one Friday night. "I knew

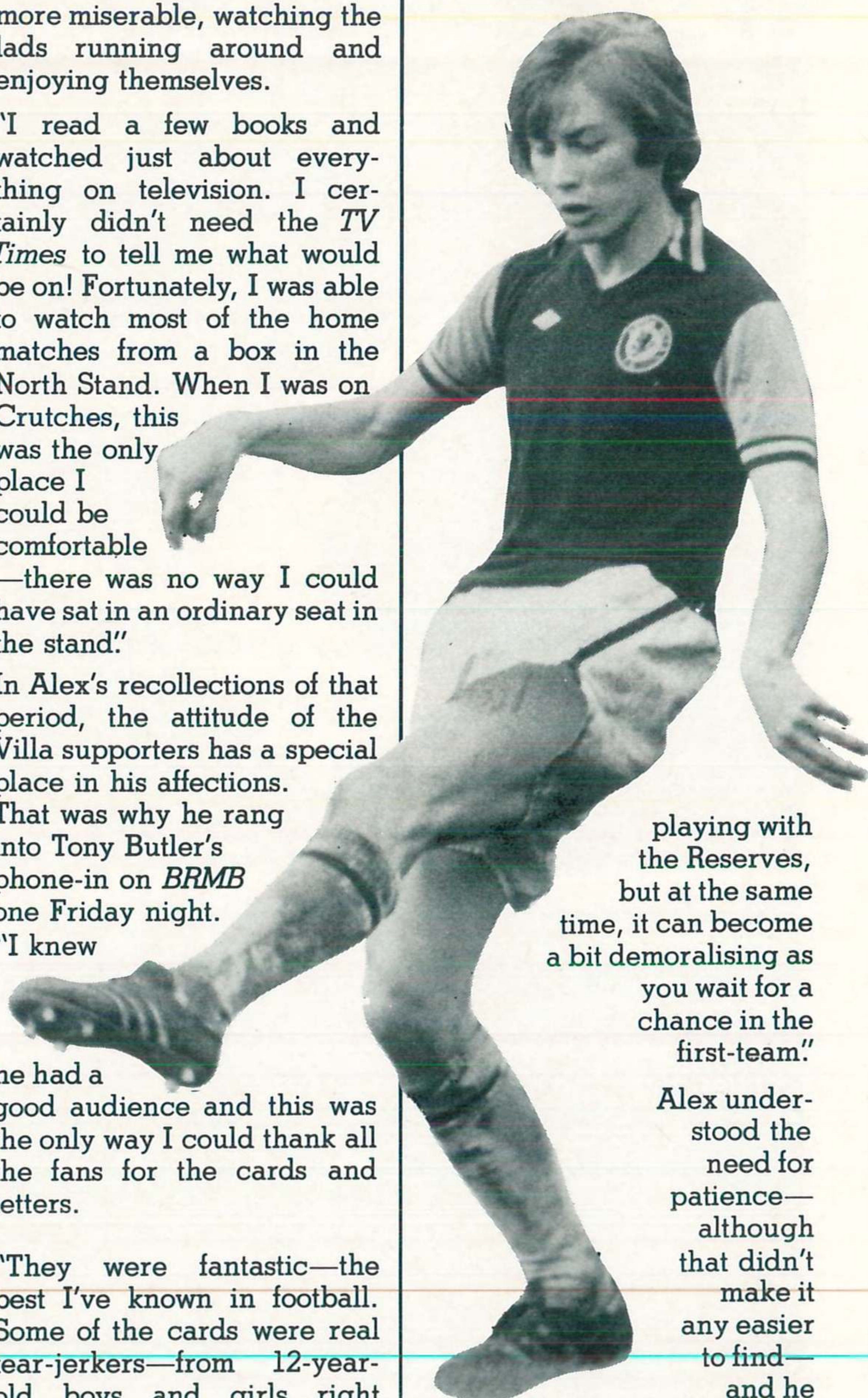
he had a good audience and this was the only way I could thank all the fans for the cards and letters."

"They were fantastic—the best I've known in football. Some of the cards were real tear-jerkers—from 12-year-old boys and girls right through to old-age pensioners. The players were great as well. In fact, I felt embarrassed and obliged to them after all their running about for me."

Now Alex has only one wish, and that is to make 1979 a Very Happy New Year for himself and the club. There are no doubts in his mind. "When the time came for my first match in the Reserves, I

was just keen to get out, and wanted to do well. I wanted to get that over and done with, but from then on, I've gone from strength to strength. I'm satisfied with my general fitness, but I have been working on my sharpness in sprinting exercises. There was a big difference just in a period of two or three weeks."

"It was a new experience to captain the reserve side, but I won't be disappointed if I'm not skipper of the first team! I just want to win back a place in the side. It was great



playing with the Reserves, but at the same time, it can become a bit demoralising as you wait for a chance in the first-team."

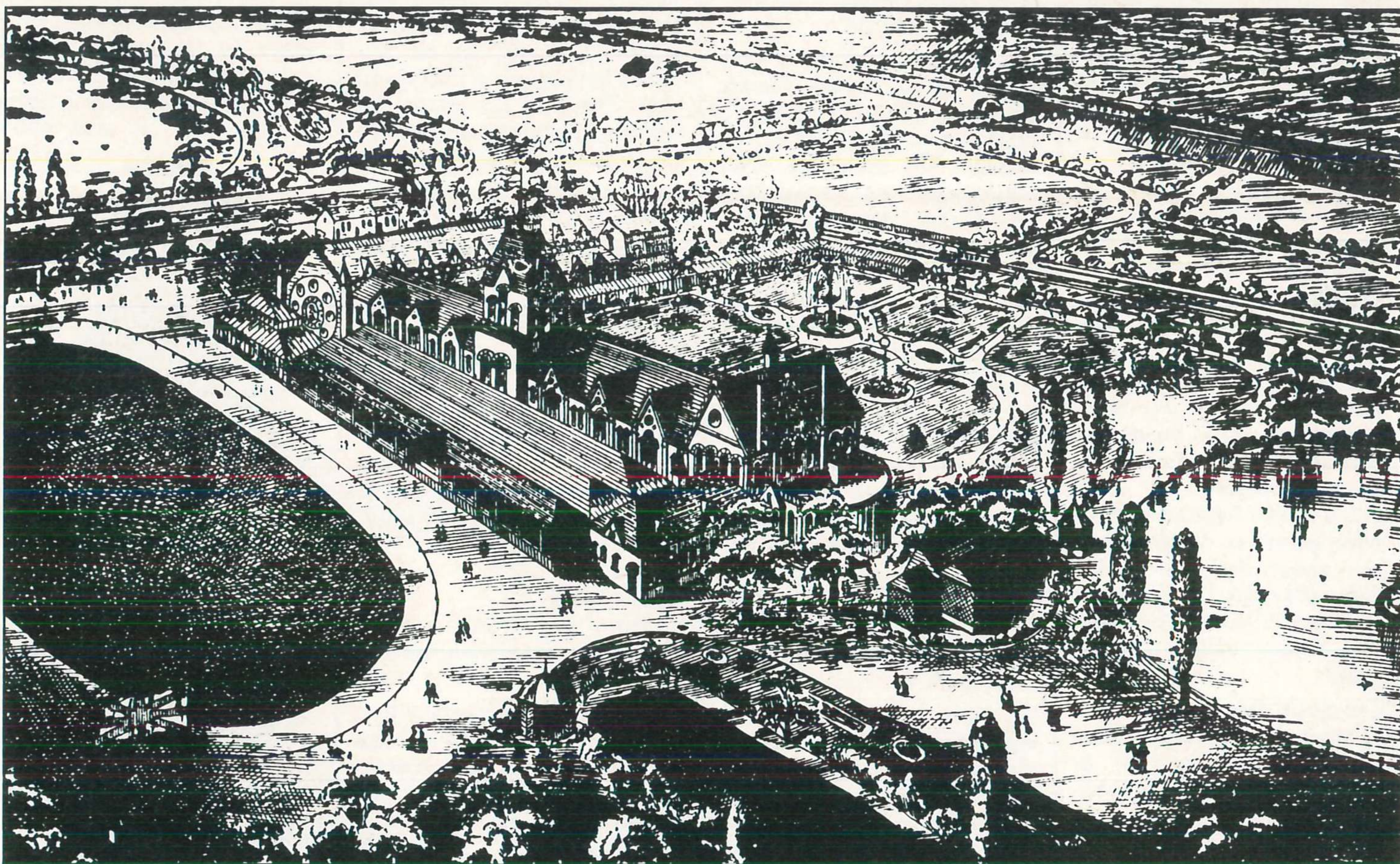
Alex understood the need for patience—although that didn't make it any easier to find—

and he recognised that when all the injuries are cleared up, there will be tremendous competition for places in midfield.

"But you must be positive," he says. "If you think you're not good enough to get in, then why try in the first place?"

Mike Beddow

...AND THEN CA



Journalists from dozens of countries made a base at Villa Park during the World Cup Finals of 1966.

We often wonder if they ever discovered the history of the building which was used as the Press Centre, complete with Telex machines pumping out stories in various languages and also a TV studio for after-the-match interviews with players and managers from Argentina, Spain and West Germany.

In Victorian times, this part of Villa park was a home for wild animals—lions, bears, etc—in the Menagerie which was a focal point of a visit to an entertainment centre known as Aston Lower Grounds.

Nowadays, part of this area is occupied by our Ticket Office, while the top-floor accommodation serves as the Club Offices. But it's hard to imagine the setting of the building when the Lower Grounds had a ballroom, a skating rink, a theatre, a winter garden, a sports field, beautifully laid-out gardens and an ornamental pool.

A century ago, the present Board Room overlooked the pool, which is basically the site of the playing area. From one side of the offices, you would have seen the gardens—now the site of the Car Park to the rear of the North Stand—and from the other side, you could have observed the sports field where a Lacrosse match was staged in 1883 between teams of Indians and Canadians.

The development of the Lower Grounds was costly—and a failure. It was an extravagant exercise on the site of Aston Hall's former vegetable garden and after a few years, the operation went bankrupt. Its story is included in a film tracing the history of Aston Manor. It is researched and

directed by Dr Jennifer Tann, a reader in economic history at the University of Aston, and has been available for hire to schools and colleges, etc, this year.

The prints of the Lower Grounds—which we were able to publish today—were taken from slides used by club photographer Terry Weir in the photographic show which he takes around the Lions Club branches.

Dr Tann's knowledge of Aston—and Birmingham as a whole—is second to none. Villa Park, it seems, was just a small part of a walled deer park in which Sir Thomas Holte built Aston Hall between 1618 and 1635. It remained in the Holte family until 1818 then occupied by James Watt Jnr until his death in 1848.

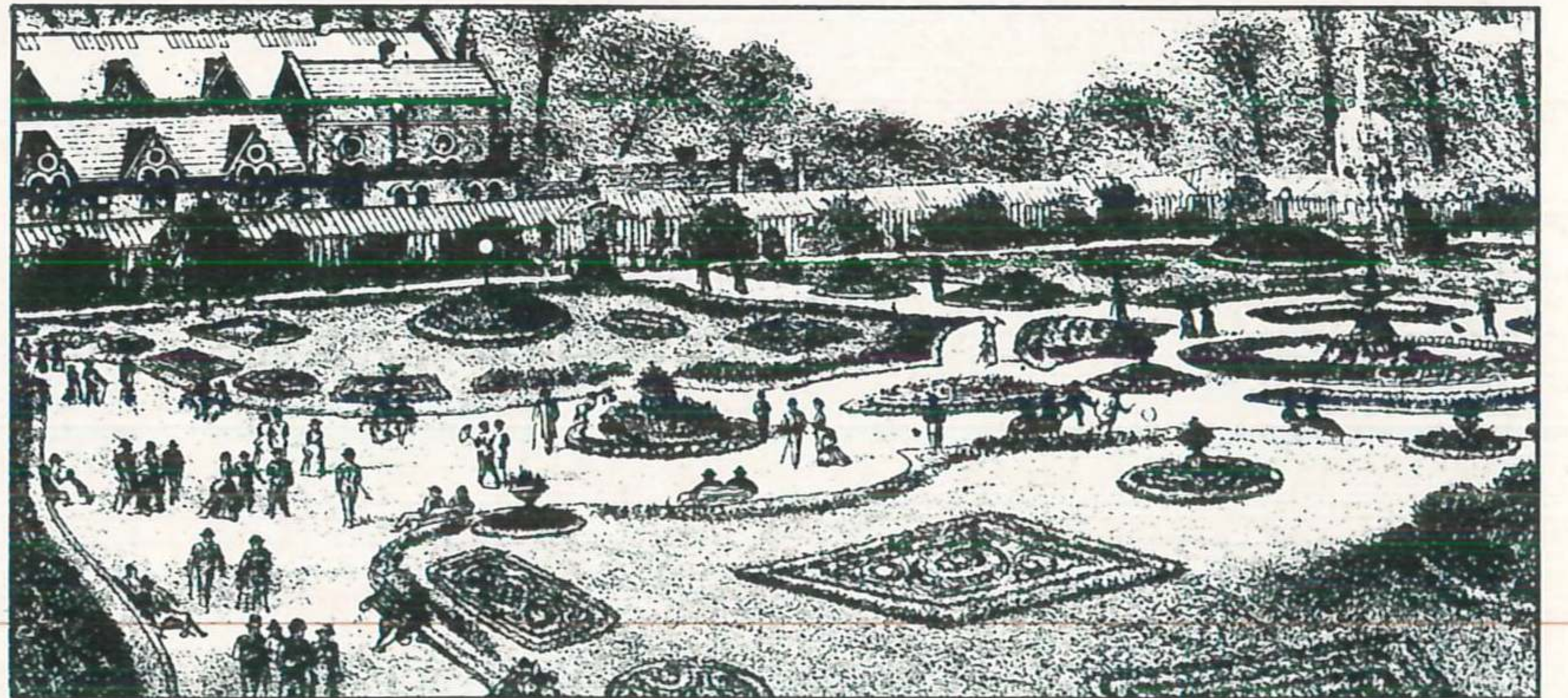
Three years later, plots of land were sold off for development—including the site of Ansell's Brewery—and large areas were used for residential development. Aston Hall itself was opened to the public by Queen Victoria in 1858 and it was around that time when the Lower Grounds opened as an entertainments centre.

Early in the 20th Century Aston became a Borough but was swallowed into Birmingham just before the First World War. In its time, Aston provided very desirable homes for the skilled workers from the city of a thousand and one trades.

Today, however, the bulldozer is slowly winning in its race to rub out more than a century of history. But Aston Hall remains to compete on the skyline with the concrete ribbon of the Aston Expressway—and we trust that Villa Park is only in its infancy after 81 years as the home of Aston Villa FC.



ME VILLA PARK!



★ Top left . . . A general view of the Lower Grounds in Victorian times.

★ Above left: The end of the main building stands today and is used as the Club Offices.

★ Top right: The Menagerie which was situated roughly behind our Ticket Office. The area still exists . . . see picture above.

★ Right: The ornamental gardens. This is now the site of the Car Park behind the North Stand . . . see picture bottom right.



YOUR SHOPPING LIST FOR VILLA SOUVENIRS

Prices are constantly subject to revision due to rising costs, materials and Customs & Excise Duties (VAT) wherever applicable.

Present prices include VAT (VAT No. 109 6804 62).

ITEM	PRICE
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Souvenir Silk.....	£1.00
Bar Scarf in Home or Away Colours.....	£2.05
Vertical Striped (acrylic) in Home or Away Colours.....	£2.05
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Bar Scarf Embroidered 'Aston Villa' in Away Colours.....	£2.55
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Team and Individual.....	35p
BOB HATS	
Claret and Blue Bobs.....	£1.30
White, Claret and Blue Bobs.....	£1.30
Embroidered 'Aston Villa' Home or Away Colours.....	£1.30
Claret and Blue Cap or Bennie Hat.....	£1.60
TIES	
Boys—Claret with Blue Crest.....	85p
Mens—Claret with Blue Crest.....	£2.55
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(Gold Wire).....	£2.95
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Stainless Steel Pendants.....	95p
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(with Metal Badge).....	45p
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OFFICIAL VILLA SOCCER KIT BY UMBRO	
Shirts (Home and Away)—Size 22"—24".....	Home £4.65 Away £4.90
26"—28".....	£4.90 £5.10
30"—32".....	£5.20 £5.45
34"—36".....	£6.15 £6.50
38"—40".....	£6.30 £6.55
Shorts—(Home and Away) Size 22"—24".....	£1.75
26"—28".....	£1.95
30"—32".....	£2.60
34"—36".....	£2.90
38"—40".....	£2.90
Socks—(Home and Away)—Small.....	£1.10 £1.45
Medium.....	£1.10 £1.45
Large.....	£1.35 £1.90
TRACK SUITS	
Sizes—26".....	£10.80
28".....	£11.45
30".....	£11.90
32".....	£12.55
34".....	£14.25
36"—38".....	£14.75
HOME & AWAY UMBRO COMPLETE SETS	
Shirt/Shorts/Socks.....	
Size—26"—28".....	£8.10
30"—32".....	£8.30
34"—36".....	£10.20
ASTON VILLA SPORTS ITEMS—TRACK SUITS	
Ligh Blue Top with Claret & Blue Trim, Claret Bottoms.....	
Size 22"—24".....	£8.75
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30"—32".....	£10.25
34"—36".....	£10.75
38"—40".....	£12.25
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VILLA SOCCER SHIRT—(Special Price)	
Size 22"—24".....	£2.60
26"—28".....	£2.70
30"—32".....	£2.90
34"—36".....	£3.30
38"—40".....	£3.60

ALL ITEMS AVAILABLE FROM THE SOUVENIR SHOP IN TRINITY ROAD.

HOLTE END SUPPORTERS CAN ALSO CALL AT THE CLUB SHOP IN THE ARCADE AT THE REAR OF THE TERRACES.

SEND A VILLA GIFT VOUCHER TO YOUR FRIENDS. ANY VALUE FROM 50p TO £5.00. WE WILL POST IT ON YOUR BEHALF.

THE VOLUNTEERS

For every first-team match at Villa Park, a group of up to 35 people provides a vital service . . . and totally without payment. They are the unsung heroes of the St. John Ambulance Brigade—a body of dedicated volunteers who don't even claim their travelling expenses.

It's in a year like this, when most of us thought twice before braving the icy blast of winter, that we should pay proper tribute to their work. In a full season of matches at Villa Park, they reckon to treat between 300 and 500 casualties at the ground.

Their squad of approximately 30 to 35 people for every match is drawn from the West Midlands area which, in effect, means Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield. "They come from all walks of life," says Area Staff Officer Alfred Egginton, who has been in charge of the Villa Park operation for 15 years. "We have a Commissionaire from Fort Dunlop, one or two schoolteachers, and State Registered Nurses from Good Hope Hospital. A lot of them provide medical attention at the big factories in Birmingham. In fact, I was in charge of the *GEC Division*, where we man the works medical centre every evening from 5pm to 10pm."

The Brigade is run entirely on voluntary donations, including a collection at Villa Park once a year when supporters have a rare opportunity of saying their thanks to the people who have helped hundreds of Villa fans over the years. Members of the Brigade have to buy their own uniform at a cost of between £50 and £60 and they give up several hours of their free time each week.

"We have many other regular duties apart from football," says Mr Egginton. "In the summer, we attend events at the Alexander Stadium and the Speedway at Perry Barr. Recently, we were on duty at the *RAC Rally* and we also go into Cinemas and Wrestling Halls."

Mr Egginton, a member of the Brigade since 1939, outlined the cases which his staff treat at Villa Park. "We see just about everything—from people feeling sick to fainting, fractures, heart attacks, and even expectant mothers. We always have a State Registered Nurse on duty and at the very big matches we normally have a doctor as well. Villa's Medical Officer, Dr Targett, is a member of the Brigade, but, of course, he is concerned with the players—although he has offered to help if we are in difficulty. Occasionally, we assist injured players and should they need to go to hospital, we take them in our own ambulance."

When a member of the public requires hospital attention, the ambulance is on immediate call to take them to the hospital which is allocated for the day. Normally, they would go to Birmingham General Hospital, but sometimes they are taken to Good Hope Hospital in Sutton Coldfield. If it is known that a person is receiving hospital treatment for a particular condition, they would be taken to the hospital that knows their case history.

• Would you be interested in joining the Brigade? If so, you are invited to contact any member on duty at Villa Park or you can write to: St. John Ambulance Brigade, 100 Lionel Street, Birmingham 3.



Picture captions . . . top to bottom:

The St. John Ambulance 'team' at Villa Park.

The senior officers at our games, Divisional Superintendent Frank Leach, Divisional Superintendent Jack Billington and Area Staff Officer Alfred Egginton.

Nurses treating a common problem—a patient with a piece of grit in his eye.

A spectator being taken on a stretcher to the Ambulance Room which is situated inside the gangway in the Witton Lane Stand.

PEOPLE



EVE RANDALL, Secretary to Alan Bennett, is in the spotlight today in our series on the people who work behind the scenes at Villa Park.

★ ★ ★

If you don't like the routine of ordinary office work and if you don't mind long hours, including the occasional evening and Saturdays, then you are qualified for a job in football!

This is exactly what prompted Eve Randall to make a 'phone call asking if there was a secretarial vacancy at Villa Park in October 1976. "I 'phoned on spec and didn't know a job was being advertised in the programme," she says. "It was just a coincidence that I called at the right time. I had always wanted to work in a line like this. Previously, I had been secretary to the General Manager at the *Strathallan Hotel* for two-and-a-half years. That was different – not just general office work but involving so many other interesting people.

"After that, I went to a transport firm and found that work monotonous. So I decided to try for a job in football. In fact, it was the second time I had applied to one of the local clubs. Just after leaving school, I wrote to Birmingham City, but I never did work there."

Eve was born in Northfield and has always lived in that part of the city. She attended Blessed Humphrey Middlemore School and then had a year's secretarial course at Hall Green Technical College. "I was never sure what I wanted to do while I was at school," she says. "I think I went round the world every day! But the only subject I really liked was PE.

"I enjoyed playing Hockey in particular. We won several tournaments at school and I have one or two medals to remind me of my time as a goal-scoring inside right! Mind you, the game could be a bit brutal at times. I remember we played the boys once. They had never played before but had watched us and had an idea about the game. They had a harder shot, but by the end they were limping off the field!"

Eve enjoys watching most sports and during the summer she likes playing tennis. As far as football was concerned, she admits to breaking the family's tradition of following Villa. "I was a Manchester United supporter and used to come down here when they were playing. The only full season I watched was in 1971-72 when I saw most of Birmingham City's home games in their promotion season. I must have brought them luck, but really I only went there because my boy friend was a Blues supporter.

Nowadays, of course, Villa's results are the only ones that matter. In Eve's first season at Villa Park, we carried off the League Cup and she recalls how busy the office was when she started the job in the midst of the run towards Wembley.

"I soon realised what a hectic job this can be" she says. "In that first season, we had so many games that I hardly knew whether we were coming or going. We were so involved and doing practically everything to help out. I wondered what I had let myself in for – everyone likes to be busy but it seemed chaotic.

"In the normal routine, we have a wide variety of jobs. We make the travel arrangements for the team – booking hotels, meals and coaches – and we deal with player's contracts and so on. We also have quite a lot of contact with the box holders and in the summer we renew the leases for the boxes. Although these come up every three years, we have only one free year out of three because the Trinity Road and North Stand boxes are not leased at the same time.

"Although the Ticket Office looks after the sale of seats, we all have to know how to work the computer because if they're pushed, we go down and help out. This applies particularly in the summer when the renewals are coming in. Another part of the job is dealing with a vast amount of correspondence. We don't handle requests for autographs in our office, but we still have to reply to a lot of letters. We get a few complaints and occasionally we get a nice letter as well. But life is never dull!"

SIXTIES

The new regime couldn't have made a better start to the task of avoiding relegation in 1968. For the first time since the war, Villa took maximum points from three games in the Christmas period—and climbed three places off the bottom of the table. Boxing Day was a memorable occasion when a crowd of 41,250 came to Villa Park for the visit of Cardiff City and the debut of Brian Tiler, who was immediately appointed skipper following his transfer from Rotherham United. The Programme Editor's report of a 2-0 victory went as follows: "Atrocious conditions, with the pitch worsening as the afternoon frost took hold, did not prevent the 'Doc's Demons' from putting on a show that delighted the largest Second Division crowd of the season, and Villa's biggest gate (apart from the local 'derby' game against Birmingham City) for many and many a day. Chasing every ball with a work-rate that was incredible, Cardiff were not allowed a look-in and they succumbed to two of the finest goals that could be wished for. Barrie Hole slammed a great shot that went in like a rocket, whilst Brian Tiler met a 'Fergy' corner kick with great precision to put the game beyond doubt." Villa then went to Carlisle for the last fixture of the year and won with a single goal from Willie Anderson. The Programme said: "Although the outcome could not be regarded as any classic, it was a triumph for the new-born confidence and sheer professionalism of our players." Writing in the *Villa News* for the first time, Tommy Docherty said: "Aston Villa's new administration and the challenge we all face provides opportunity for players, administrators, directors, and for our fans to walk together towards a mutual aim . . . to make Aston Villa the first name in football again."

FIFTIES

Christmas 1957, brought a welcome 'present' for Villa supporters. The Programme announcement said simple: "Gerry Hitchens, the Cardiff City centre-forward, was transferred to Aston Villa on Friday 20th December, and he led our attack against Birmingham City the following day. He stands 5ft 11ins and weighing 12st should add punch and weight to our forward line, for he is both clever and a good goal-getter." A crowd of 40,000 saw the first appearance by a player who was to become one of the Club's most popular strikers of the post-war period. Unfortunately, his debut coincided with a Birmingham victory, achieved with goals from Eddy Brown and Noel Kinsey. But Hitchens made his mark on Boxing Day when forcing an own goal and scoring the third himself in a 3-0 victory over Arsenal before 41,000 spectators at Villa Park. On the same day, one of Hitchens' predecessors in the number nine shirt, Derek 'Doc' Pace, was transferred to Sheffield United and started his new career with one of the 'Blades' four goals against Blackburn Rovers. The Programme Editor commented: "Derek, who came to Villa Park when quite a youth, gave eight years' valuable service to Aston Villa and we feel sure he will give of his best to his new club." Hitchens added to his reputation by signing off 1957 with both goals in Villa's 2-1 win against Everton at Goodison Park. Jimmy Harris, later to lead Birmingham's attack, pulled a goal back for the Merseysiders and we needed a great last-minute save by Nigel Sims to hold on to the points.

FORTIES

Villa's form was definitely inconsistent while playing three games in four days during Christmas 1949. There were no Christmas Eve celebrations on the return journey from a 3-0 defeat at Fulham, but Boxing Day brought a much better performance—a 3-2 victory at Molineux which removed Wolves' unbeaten home record for the season. Villa made the early running and the Programme Editor recorded the scoring as follows: "When Ivor Powell headed a free-kick by Leslie Smith past Williams, it was no more than they deserved. In the 40th minute, Swinbourne nicely equalised with a header from a Mullen centre, but hardly had the cheers died down than George Edwards had put Villa in front again. "Wolves pressed following half-time and in the 60th minute Smyth beat Wakeman to again put his side on level terms. With just over 15 minutes play left, Ford gathered a Dorsett ball in the middle of the pitch, brushed past Pritchard, and as Williams advanced to meet him, our Welsh international gently put the ball in the back of the net." Twenty-four hours later the boot was firmly on the other foot when Wolves galloped home by 4-1 in front of the biggest crowd of the season at Villa Park. Swinbourne scored twice to give them a convincing lead soon after half-time and despite a Villa goal from Dixon, Wolves went on to win comfortably with further goals from Smyth and Pye.

CLUB SCENE

STAFF CHANGES AT VILLA PARK

Keith Smith has been appointed Manager of Aston Villa Development Association and Peter Young becomes his Deputy in a general re-shuffle following the departure of Keith Dale. Also, Mrs Jackie Bradley, who has been with us for nine years, is leaving AVDA. We would like to thank Keith and Jackie most sincerely for their efforts on behalf of the Association and the Football Club. We wish them every success in the future.

A further staff change is that Graham Clark, formerly Editor of the *Villa Times*, has joined Aston Villa's Commercial Department and will be involved in all aspects of this section. Eventually, Graham will be working on several ideas which have been on our list of 'things to do'.

The *Villa Times* ceased publication because of a decision, for financial reasons, which was taken by the publishers, *The Tamworth Herald*. Any queries regarding *Villa Times* advertising and subscriptions, etc—should be addressed to *The Tamworth Herald*.

Readers of *Villa Times* are invited to take out a subscription to the *Villa News & Record*. Details of rates can be obtained by writing to: Eric Woodward, Commercial Manager, Aston Villa FC, Villa Park, Birmingham B6 6HE.

JOE'S WAITING GAME!

Joe Ward, our new Scottish striker from Clyde, linked up with Villa just before Christmas—and was more disappointed than anyone when the snow and ice caused a soccer close-down for many weeks. Joe also had the bad luck to collect a bout of 'flu immediately after arriving in Birmingham from his job with a business firm in Glasgow.

Joe, who played as a part-time professional for Clyde, was a consistent scorer over the last two years and enjoyed a particularly successful spell on the run-in to Clyde's triumph in the Scottish Second Division Championship last Spring. He netted 13 times in the final 15 games and scored a hat-trick against Meadowbank.

Our picture (below) shows Joe and the other Scottish newcomer, Dave Cunningham, enjoying a social evening with comedian Leslie Crowther.



PROGRAMME SALES

All enquiries for back issues of the *Villa News & Record* should be addressed to: Gerald Harris and Associates, 550 Chester Road, Aldridge, Staffordshire (Tel: 021-353 4262).

RESERVED SEATS

Advance Bookings . . . Reserved Seats for individual Home Football League matches are bookable in advance from the Ticket Office by post or personal application.

Applications by Post . . . Are accepted one month before the game and should be accompanied by the correct remittance (cheque or postal order) and s.a.e.

Personal Applications . . . May be made during Office hours (9-15am to 5-00pm) during the two weeks prior to the game.

Prices . . . Trinity Road Stand: Wing (Doors A & H) £2.00. Witton Lane Stand: Centre (Doors N & P) £2.50; Wing (Doors M & Q) £2.00. North Stand: Front £2.50; Centre £2.00; Rear £1.50. Trinity Road Enclosure £1.50.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Phil Hunt, a valued member of the backroom team until his retirement ten years ago, celebrated his 80th birthday recently. His family, his friends and all at Villa Park, would like to wish him well. Phil was with Villa for 38 years and now lives in Droitwich.

GOALKEEPER SCORES!

Youth team goalkeeper Mark Kendall achieved the unusual distinction of scoring from a clearance when playing for a Villa 'Under-19' side against the England Youth XI. "The ball bounced once and went over the 'keeper's head," explained Youth Coach Keith Leonard.

The match was played on the University of Aston ground in Great Barr. Villa, fielding two 'over age' players in Gary Shelton and Dave Cunningham, won 3-2 after building up a three goal lead at one stage with Mark Kendall's spectacular long shot and two goals from Gary Williams.

The England side included Andy Ritchie, who has recently been among the goals in Manchester United's first-team, Mark Dennis, who has held down a regular place in Birmingham City's defence, and Justin Fashanu, who made his debut for Norwich City this year, is seen in the action picture below.



DOUBLE JACKPOT

Bill Niblo is a very popular fellow at Shard End Community Centre. And no wonder—he has sold two winning tickets worth £1,000 each in Villa's fund-raising competitions this season!

Mrs Irene Vaughan hit the jackpot when she bought a Bingo ticket from Bill, and received her cheque from Jimmy Rimmer. A few weeks later, Brian Little presented a £1,000 Lottery prize to another of Bill's customers—Mr Albert Perkins, a Parks Superintendent who lives at Pithall Road, Shard End, Birmingham 34.

The picture (left) shows Mr Perkins receiving his cheque from Brian, watched by Keith Smith (far right) and the Agent with the 'golden touch' Bill Niblo.



SCHOOL VISIT

A group of Gloucestershire scholboys completed a happy day out in Birmingham by coming to Villa Park. The Red Marley Junior School team and supporters (pictured above) were given a quick look around the ground and enjoyed the opportunity of watching a First Division game.

The youngsters were brought to Birmingham by Mr E. Baum, who lived in Electric Avenue, Witton, before he moved to Red Marley to take up a job with Gloucester County Council. His brother lives in Great Barr and their respective sons both play for the schools football team.

So Red Marley went to Great Barr on a Saturday morning and played an honourable draw with St. Margaret's Junior School. Then it was on to Villa Park—with spare pocket money ready for an expedition in our Souvenir Shop!

TWENTY QUESTIONS (From Page Two) . . .
1—West Germany 'B' 1, England 'B' 2 in Augsburg. 2—Brian Little. 3—Tony Brown (WBA). 4—Steve Phillips (Brendford). 5—Hartlepool, York, Rochdale. 6—Crystal Palace. 7—Crystal Palace. 8—Swansea. 9—Mario Kempes. 10—Rob Rensenbrink. 11—Barcelona. 12—Watford. 13—Ian Greaves (Bolton). 14—Borussia Moenchengladbach. 15—Blyth Spartans. 16—Ken McNught and John Deehan scored the goals in the home match against Barcelona. 17—Wrexham. 18—Steve Coppell. 19—Austria. 20—Allan Evans.

SAMMY AMONGST THE STARS!

Sammy Morgan had a problem last August. He just couldn't raise the enthusiasm to go on another round of the Third Division circuit—and that seemed the only possibility when he was in dispute over terms with Cambridge United.

The solution came as a complete surprise to the 32-year-old former Villa striker. In a matter of 72 hours, he was swept into a competition where he brushes shoulders with stars from Holland's World Cup Final side.

Sammy signed for the Dutch club, Sparta Rotterdam, as replacement for another British forward, Ray Clarke, who went to Ajax for £200,000. And the move could lead him into European competition next season, for Sparta are sixth in the Dutch League with the help of seven goals in 15 appearances by the popular Irish international.

"I was at the crossroads of my career when Cambridge weren't too keen to give me the salary increase I wanted," says Sammy. "After leaving Villa, I had gone from the Third to the Second Division with Brighton and then did the same with Cambridge last season. A transfer to another Third Division club seemed most likely, but I couldn't face going back to all those grounds.

"Then I was suddenly given the opportunity of coming to Holland. I came over here on Thursday and played my first game for Sparta on Sunday. It has gone reasonably well so far, although it is obviously different in some ways and I've had to adjust my play."



Sammy Morgan after scoring a hat-trick for Villa against Hull City.

We spoke to Sammy at a time when Dutch football was also fighting a losing battle against the winter weather. They always have a three-week break at Christmas—which gave Sammy the chance to visit his family in Great Yarmouth—but the snow and ice prevented a resumption throughout January.

"It seems as if the weather is much the same all over Europe," he told us when we telephoned him at his club house in Hellevoetsluis, a coastal town some 20 miles outside Rotterdam.

"I know you've had plenty of postponements from listening to the sports programmes on BBC. This keeps me in touch with what's going on at home. In fact, I'm probably more in touch than if I was still in

England! We play on Sundays, so I listen to the English results on Saturday. We also get clips of English games on Dutch and Belgian TV."

Sammy says he has adjusted quite well to the Dutch way of life, but he abandoned his plans to learn the language after attending a couple of classes. "It didn't seem necessary because a lot of people speak English," he explained. "Most of the lads in the team can talk with me in English—and I probably have an advantage on the field. I can't get into so much trouble by speaking out about decisions!"

At first, he wondered whether he would be good enough to play in one of the world's most skilful competitions. "I had my reservations," he admits. "But Sparta seemed sure and it seemed a good chance to have the experience, even if it's only for one year. If all goes well, I could sign for another year on a better contract and, in that case, I might decide to stay."

There's no doubting Sammy's popularity with the Sparta supporters. He started with half-a-dozen goals in the first eight or nine games and became something of a local hero when scoring the only goal in the 1-0 win against local rivals Feyenoord.

"I have been lucky with the fans at all my clubs," says Sammy. "Perhaps it's the way I play that enables me to get on with the crowd. If you have a go, people tend to forgive the other things and stick with you."

"The game has a different style over here. I've had to curb myself a little, but they don't relish the physical side—and that's why the club bought me. Outside the box, their players are OK, but not too many are keen to get into the box. We play with two wingers and that helps me as well."

"I would say you either have to be physical or very skilful in Holland. You won't get away with a little bit of each. One or two other British players are here. Ronnie Goodlass, from Everton, has done quite well for NAC Breda and Ray Clarke is a big name after scoring so many goals for Sparta. Mel Holden, from Blackpool and Sunderland, is also here with Pec Zwolle."

"Regardless of what happens when the club decides on new contracts in March, I can only say I've enjoyed myself. It's been a real experience to play against some of the World Cup stars. In our last game before the Christmas break, we went to PSV Eindhoven (holders of the UEFA Cup) and lost only 2-1 in a very good game. They had Brandts, Poortvliet and the Van der Kerkhof twins from the World Cup team."

"I've also played against Rudi Krol, of Ajax, and there are many other top players in sides like AZ '67 and Twente Enschede. Even now, I've got a lot to look forward to. I haven't played yet at Ajax or Feyenoord and going to these grounds is so much better than where I might have been in the English Third Division."

Coming over here also enabled me to get back into the Northern Ireland team against Denmark, but that wasn't really a good game for me."

After playing for five clubs—Port Vale, Villa, Brighton, Cambridge and Sparta—Sammy still says that his best times in football were at Villa Park. "The only complaint I've got is that I wasn't there longer," he adds. "It was an experience I would never have missed—with the best club in the country. We had a good spirit with everyone working together."

"I'm sorry to hear about all the injuries Villa have had this season—but you can tell the Boss he can have me back for a couple of weeks! Seriously, though, I was really hoping to play in Keith Leonard's Testimonial Match. The opportunities of playing again at Villa Park must be few and far between. I asked Sparta if I could go over, but although they understood what it meant to me, they said they couldn't afford the risk of injury."

MIKE BEDDOW



SAMMY MORGAN PLAYING FOR HIS DUTCH CLUB SPARTA.

VILLA NEWS AND RECORD

VOLUME NUMBER 36 • PROGRAMME NUMBER 18 • SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT • WEDNESDAY, 7th MARCH, 1979 • KICK-OFF: 7.30pm

LEAGUE DIVISION ONE • ASTON VILLA v BOLTON WANDERERS

BOLTON

The signs were obvious for Bolton Wanderers as they slipped into the Third Division less than nine years ago. All around them, Lancashire offered examples of town clubs faltering in competition with the big-city giants from Manchester and Merseyside.

But from the gloom of attendances running almost as low as 5,000, Bolton climbed back to the First Division—starting under the management of Jimmy Armfield and then switching to current chief Ian Greaves in October, 1974.

Adjustment to the top division delivered some problems, mainly when Wanderers lost seven consecutive away games and conceded 21 goals in the process, but their first away win at QPR in December started a promising run of eight points from six outings. Unfortunately, the momentum was then lost as Bolton played only once in two months.

During the defensive disruption, former Rotherham goalkeeper Jim McDonagh retained an ever-present record, but no fewer than nine players were used in the back four. Paul Jones, a member of the full England squad only two years ago, and Black Country-born Sam Allardyce played only the first match as the centre backs and didn't link up again until November! Both players suffered from injuries, Allardyce was also put out by suspension, and Jones had a spell at right back.

Jones finally returned to the No. 5 shirt in mid-November, but by then, the highly-rated Mike Walsh had established his claim on the other centre back position. The Manchester-born youngster has also proved himself at left back and in midfield during a two-season 'apprenticeship' in first-team football.

The full back combination now seems settled on two players of considerable experience. Peter Nicholson, a bargain signing from Blackpool in 1971, has been a versatile member of the squad since Wanderers' time in the Third Division, while Tony Dunne is in his sixth season at Burnden Park

after playing 415 League games in 13 years with Manchester United. He collected a European Cup-winners medal in 1968.

In emergency, Bolton have used midfield men Roy Greaves and Brian Smith in the back division and they also gave League debuts on the same day in September to a pair of teenage full backs, David Burke, from Winsford, and Mike Graham, from Lancaster.

Farnworth-born Greaves, who has been awarded a Testimonial in recognition of just over 450 League outings for Bolton, is still a valued member of the normal midfield pool. Smith, a Mancunian who had a loan spell with Bradford City last season, also had an extended run, but lost the place when Mr Greaves paid a club record £250,000 for the signature of Neil McNab, the Scottish Under-21 cap from Tottenham.

The regular midfield trio was completed by former England Under-21 skipper Peter Reid, but he was injured early in the season and then sidelined again in January. This meant a change of duty for Neil Whatmore, who dropped back from the striker's role which brought him 21 League and Cup goals in the promotion season.

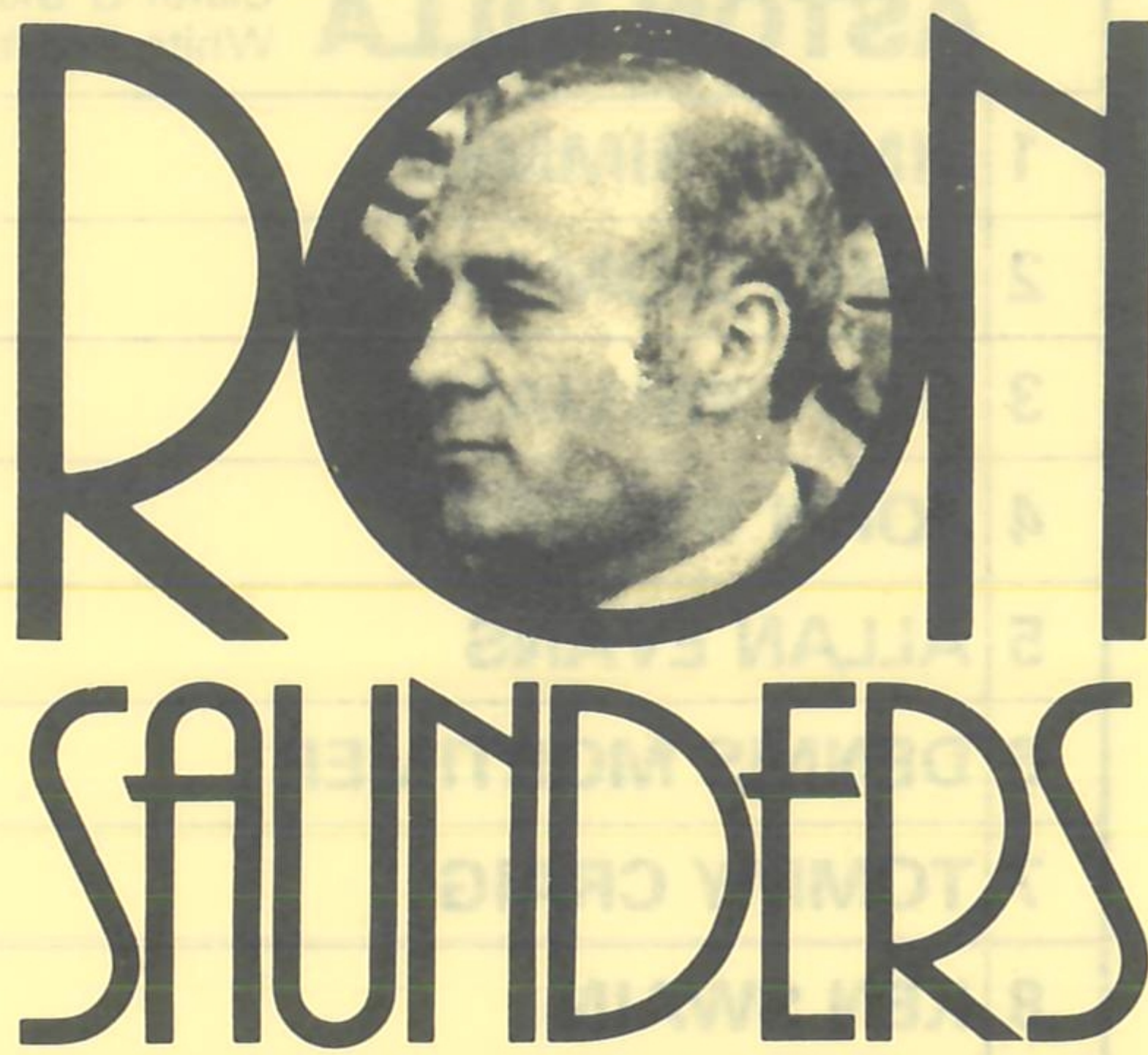
Whatmore has been unable to regain a place in the attack, where Bolton have possibly the most experienced front three in the country. Willie Morgan made his First Division debut for Burnley as an 18-year-old in 1963, and then had a successful time with Manchester United before returning to Burnley and later finding his way to Bolton on a free transfer three seasons ago.

Frank Worthington, a member of Ian Greaves' promotion team at Huddersfield, rejoined his former boss at Bolton in a £90,000 move from Leicester last season and Alan Gowling, also at Huddersfield with Mr Greaves, was signed from Newcastle for £120,000 last March.

Between them, Bolton's strike force can boast more than 1,300 League appearances and over 300 goals. Worthington was the First Division's leading marksman with 17 League and Cup goals before the 'big freeze', and at the same stage, Gowling had chipped in with 10.



MIKE WALSH



It was great for us to get back into the routine last Saturday with our first home game of 1979 and we all realise how much winning against the 'old enemy' means to all our supporters.

The game, as you will agree, never rose to great heights, but the most important thing is that we got two points.

So far this season, we have added Ken Swain, Joe Ward, Kevin Ready, David Cunningham and Noel Blake to the ranks and it's interesting to note that only one of these—Ken Swain (£100,000)—cost a substantial amount.

Over the past few years we have been fortunate enough in the transfer market to pick up quite a few bargains. I would like to think that at some time in the future, we can look back and say that all of this season's new comers were bargains.

With so many games in hand of most other teams above us in the First Division, tonight's game against Bolton Wanderers carries as much importance as if it were in a Cup competition.

I sincerely feel that if we can win three or four games on the trot and build up momentum and rhythm, we can go on to finish the season high enough in the League to qualify for Europe.

Bolton's position in the table will ensure that they will be giving everything they have got tonight, and with Frank Worthington, the current top scorer in the First Division, in their side, there's no way we can expect any favours.

However, I am confident that with your usual tremendous support and with 110% from each and every one of our players, we can get the right result and build up on what we achieved last Saturday.

RON SAUNDERS

VILLA NEWS—EMERGENCY ISSUE

As you may have seen in the local Press, the *Villa News* pioneered a system for a 'timeless' programme as an important economy during the bad weather. Tonight's issue is one that was prepared for subsequently-postponed matches in February—we hope you will find the quality normally associated with our magazine.

LEAGUE DIVISION ONE—TABLE AND HOME ATTENDANCES 1978-79

Teams	P	Home					Away					A Pts
		W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	
Liverpool	26	12	1	0	35	3	7	3	3	23	7	42
Everton	28	10	4	1	24	9	4	6	3	15	15	38
West Bromwich Albion	25	6	3	2	24	10	9	3	2	28	15	36
Arsenal	28	8	5	2	26	13	6	3	4	19	12	36
Leeds United	29	7	3	4	28	15	6	7	2	25	20	36
Nottingham Forest	24	5	6	0	13	6	5	6	2	15	10	32
Manchester United	27	6	4	4	19	19	6	3	4	21	24	31
Southampton	28	8	5	2	26	12	2	4	7	8	20	29
Tottenham Hotspur	28	6	3	5	14	20	4	6	4	17	23	29
Bristol City	30	7	4	4	25	16	3	4	8	10	21	28
ASTON VILLA	24	3	6	2	13	12	5	5	3	16	9	27
Ipswich Town	28	6	3	6	22	17	5	2	6	14	18	27
Coventry City	27	7	4	3	24	21	3	3	7	10	25	27
Manchester City	28	4	4	6	20	22	4	6	4	20	14	26
Norwich City	27	5	7	2	20	13	0	9	4	18	30	26
Derby County	27	6	4	4	19	18	2	2	9	10	29	22
Middlesbrough	26	4	3	4	18	13	3	3	9	17	24	20
Bolton Wanderers	25	5	3	3	21	14	1	3	9	11	30	20
Wolverhampton Wanderers	27	6	2	6	15	21	2	1	10	11	28	19
Queen's Park Rangers	28	3	7	6	16	23	1	3	8	9	19	18
Chelsea	27	2	3	8	13	26	2	4	8	16	30	15
Birmingham City	27	3	3	6	15	17	0	1	14	7	27	10

FIRST-TEAM APPEARANCES 1978-79

	League		Cup	
	A	G	A	G
CARRODUS	6	—	4	—
COWANS	19	2	2	—
CRAIG	17	2	5	—
DEEHAN	13	3	4	—
EVANS A	22	3	5	—
EVANS D	2	—	—	—
GIDMAN	20	—	4	—
GRAY	9	4	4	2
GREGORY	21	7	5	1
LINTON	2	—	—	—
LITTLE	14	1	4	1
McNAUGHT	22	1	6	—
MORTIMER	23	1	6	—
PHILLIPS	3	—	2	—
PHIMMER	24	—	6	—
SHAW	2	—	—	—
SHELTON	13	3	2	1
SMITH	8	—	1	—
SWAIN	8	1	1	—
WARD	1	—	—	—
WILLIAMS	16	—	5	—
YOUNG	3	—	—	—
Own Goal	—	1	—	—

FOOTBALL AT VILLA PARK

Saturday, 10th March (3.00pm)
CENTRAL LEAGUE

VILLA v SHEFFIELD UNITED

Monday, 12th March (7.30pm)
CENTRAL LEAGUE

VILLA v MANCHESTER UTD.

Saturday, 17th March (3.00pm)
CENTRAL LEAGUE

VILLA v WOLVES

Tuesday, 20th March (7.30pm)
LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

VILLA v Q.P.R.

TEAMS SCORES

ASTON VILLA		Claret & Blue Shirts, White Shorts.
1	JIMMY RIMMER	
2	JOHN GIDMAN	
3	GARY WILLIAMS	
4	JOHN GREGORY	
5	ALLAN EVANS	
6	DENNIS MORTIMER	
7	TOMMY CRAIG	
8	KEN SWAIN	
9	JOE WARD	
10	GORDON COWANS	
11	GARY SHELTON	
12		
BOLTON WAND.		White Shirts, Navy Blue Shorts.
1	JIM McDONAGH	
2	PETER NICHOLSON	
3	TONY DUNNE	
4	ROY GREAVES	
5	PAUL JONES	
6	MIKE WALSH	
7	WILLIE MORGAN	
8	DAVID BURKE	
9	ALAN GOWLING	
10	FRANK WORTHINGTON	
11	NEIL McNAB	
12		

A	Nottingham Forest Grasshoppers	L	
B	Ipswich Town Barcelona	N	
C	Manchester City B. Moenchengladbach	P	
D	Norwich City Wolves	S	
E	Sunderland Wrexham	T	
F	Chester Lincoln	V	
G	Chesterfield Shrewsbury Town	W	
H	Oxford United Southend United	X	
J	Bradford City Aldershot	Y	
K	Hereford United Hartlepool United	Z	

★ *At the time of going to Press, many fixtures were undecided. Additional matches will be announced for the blank letters.*

OFFICIALS

REFEREE: K. G. SALMON,
Barnet

Ken Salmon, a Road Safety Officer, started refereeing in 1963 and reached the League list from the Isthmian League. He was a linesman for England v Wales (Amateur) in 1970, a League Cup semi-final (1974) and a UEFA Cup match in Sweden (1975).

LINESMEN: R. F. HARRIS, Oxford — (Red Flag)
J. F. PARDOE, Kidderminster — (Yellow Flag)

Football League Division One

ASTON VILLA v WEST BROMWICH ALBION

Saturday 31st March 1979 — Kick-off: 3-00pm

The match will be all-ticket, and the entire Witton Standing End allocated to Albion, together with a large allocation of seats in the Witton Stand.

Standing Tickets for the Holte End will be priced £1.00 each, and sold on the same basis as Seating Tickets, i.e., postal applications only until Monday next, 19th March, when the remaining tickets will be put on general sale from the Ticket Office from 9-15am.

Applications must contain the correct remittance and a stamped addressed return envelope and will be dealt with in date order received. Experience of General Sales on specified evenings in recent years have shown a declining sale, and ample tickets have been left available for subsequent sales from the Ticket Office.

Aston Villa Standing Season Ticket Holders are reminded that they already have their tickets for the match in their Season Ticket Books, and should use the Season Ticket Holder turnstiles at the Holte End on match-day to obtain admission.



TODAY'S MATCH BALL DONOR...

ALAN WEBB
BOOKMAKER, TAMWORTH

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No14

JIMMY RIMMER



WELCOME . . . We are hosts today, in the Executive Box, to

**Mr David Roberts, his family
and friends**